

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (original) A fitting for retrofitting to a tracheostomy tube comprising:  
an inlet portion for attachment to an outlet structure of the tracheostomy tube; and  
an outlet portion for extending from the outlet structure of the tracheostomy tube,  
wherein the outlet portion is connected to the inlet portion, and wherein the outlet portion  
comprises at least one side opening.
2. (original) The tracheostomy tube fitting of claim 1, wherein the outlet portion  
comprises a plurality of rows of side openings and a plurality of columns of side openings.
3. (original) The tracheostomy tube fitting of claim 2, wherein each row is offset from  
an adjacent row and wherein each column is offset from an adjacent column.
4. (original) The tracheostomy tube fitting of claim 1, further comprising a filter  
attached to the outlet portion for filtering air that enters the fitting through the at least one side  
opening.
5. (original) A fitting for retrofitting to a tracheostomy tube comprising:  
a hollow cylinder having an inner diameter, an outer diameter, an inlet end  
opening and an outlet end opening, the cylinder further comprising:  
an inlet portion for attachment to an outlet structure of the tracheostomy tube,  
wherein the inlet portion comprises the inlet end opening; and  
an outlet portion for extending from the outlet structure of the tracheostomy tube,  
wherein the outlet portion is connected to the inlet portion, and wherein the outlet portion  
comprises the outlet end opening and at least one side opening that extends from the inner  
diameter to the outer diameter.

6. (original) The tracheostomy tube fitting of claim 5, wherein the outlet portion comprises a plurality of rows of side openings that extend from the inner diameter to the outer diameter and a plurality of columns of side openings that extend from the inner diameter to the outer diameter.

7. (original) The tracheostomy tube fitting of claim 6, wherein each row is offset from an adjacent row and wherein each column is offset from an adjacent column.

8. (original) The tracheostomy tube fitting of claim 5, further comprising a filter attached to the outlet portion for filtering air that enters the fitting through the at least one side opening.

9. (original) A tracheostomy tube comprising:  
an inlet structure for insertion into a patient's trachea; and  
an outlet structure for extending from an opening in the patient's neck, wherein the outlet structure is connected to the inlet structure, and wherein the outlet structure comprises at least one side opening.

10. (original) The tracheostomy tube of claim 9, wherein the outlet structure comprises a plurality of rows of side openings and a plurality of columns of side openings.

11. (original) The tracheostomy tube of claim 10, wherein each row is offset from an adjacent row and wherein each column is offset from an adjacent column.

12. (original) The tracheostomy tube of claim 9, further comprising a filter attached to the outlet structure for filtering air that enters the tracheostomy tube through the at least one side opening.

13. (original) A tracheostomy tube comprising:  
an inlet structure for insertion into a patient's trachea; and  
an outlet structure for extending from an opening in the patient's neck, wherein the outlet structure is connected to the inlet structure, and wherein the outlet structure comprises

an inner diameter, an outer diameter and at least one side opening that extends from the inner diameter to the outer diameter.

14. (original) The tracheostomy tube of claim 13, wherein the outlet structure comprises a plurality of rows of side openings that extend from the inner diameter to the outer diameter and a plurality of columns of side openings that extend from the inner diameter to the outer diameter.

15. (original) The tracheostomy tube of claim 14, wherein each row is offset from an adjacent row and wherein each column is offset from an adjacent column.

16. (original) The tracheostomy tube of claim 13, further comprising a filter attached to the outlet structure for filtering air that enters the tracheostomy tube through the at least one side opening.

17. (withdrawn) A method of modifying a tracheostomy tube that comprises an inlet structure for insertion into a patient's trachea and an outlet structure for extending from an opening in the patient's neck, the method comprising:

producing at least one side opening in the outlet structure of the tracheostomy tube.

18. (new) An occlusion preventing fitting arranged for connection to an outlet structure of a tracheostomy tube, which outlet structure comprises a substantially cylindrical tube terminal portion defining a tube end air flow aperture which lies in a plane substantially perpendicular to the length of the outlet structure, the fitting comprising:

a sleeve having opposite open ends and having a substantially cylindrical sleeve wall through which is defined at least one sleeve wall opening, the sleeve being arranged to be engaged at one end thereof around the outlet structure of the tracheostomy tube with the other end of the sleeve spaced beyond the tube end air flow aperture relative to the tracheostomy tube and with the sleeve wall opening positioned toward the tracheostomy tube from the other end of the sleeve in effective air flow communication with the tube end air flow aperture.

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19. (new)      The occlusion preventing fitting according to claim 18 in which the sleeve is flexible and plural openings are defined through the sleeve wall at locations spaced around the sleeve.

20. (new)      An occlusion preventing tracheostomy tube having an outer end structure which is located outside a trachea in use of the tracheostomy tube, the outer end structure having an air flow aperture at an outer end of the tube which lies substantially in a plane transversely of the tracheostomy tube and also defining at least one air flow opening laterally into the tracheostomy tube at a location along the outer end structure of the tracheostomy tube from the air flow aperture.